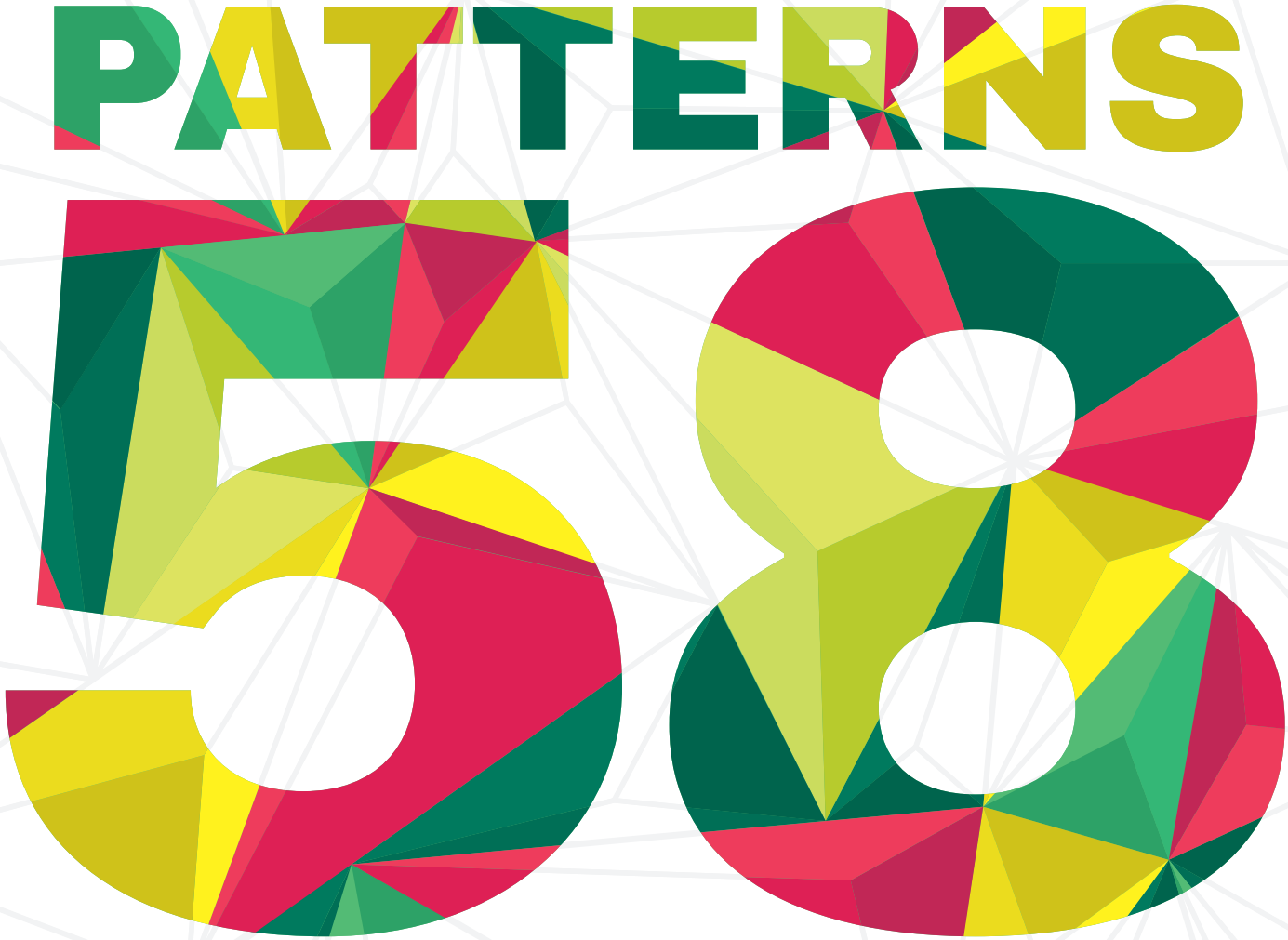


2016

The 58th Edition of Patterns

Patterns magazine is St. Clair County Community College's literary and arts publication. Published annually since 1959, *Patterns* showcases the best writing and visual artwork produced by SC4 students each year. While organization and oversight of the publication has always been handled by SC4 faculty and staff, over the years we have increasingly involved students in every aspect of the publication; from producing its content, to editing, to the creative layout and design work, our students have taken on a major role in creating each issue of the magazine.

This year's edition marks our continued focus on improving the physical and aesthetic qualities of the magazine. Perhaps as a result of these improvements, last year's 57th edition won Second Place in its division for the Community College Humanities Association's Literary Magazine Competition. This year, three very talented SC4 students presented proposals for the layout and design of the 58th edition. We were pleased to select Emily Mainguy's concept with illustrations supported by Jason Grill, which makes excellent use of full color throughout.

Since its inception, *Patterns* has featured student writing and artwork selected as the results of a competition conducted in the fall of the year. Any SC4 student is eligible to enter. Panels of volunteer judges in the faculty of English and Fine Arts determine the prize winners and Selections of Merit for each genre.

IN MEMORIAM



John Henry

We mourn the passing of retired SC4 communication design professor John Henry, who was born on Nov. 4, 1945, and passed away on Friday, March 4, 2016. He taught at SC4 for 35 years, retiring in 2013. John's incredible talent and love of art was not just something he did, but who he was. He taught art all over the country at many colleges and universities. As a graphic designer, he had over 100 pieces in print and received many regional and national awards for his work. He exhibited both nationally and internationally in 25 one-man shows. We honor his memory.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SC4 Friends of the Arts is a committed group of business, community members and SC4 faculty and staff, that support the arts of SC4, including music, theatre, creative writing and visual arts. They are building community through the arts.

Programs and activities supported by Friends of the Arts include:

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- Outreach choir concerts
- SC4 Symphonic Band concerts
- Free Noon and Night Concert Series, including free music workshops
- Free Twilight Concert Series
- Special musical performances
- Student, alumni and faculty art exhibitions
- Theatrical productions with the SC4 Players
- *Patterns* magazine
- Poetry readings
- Literary workshops

SC4 thanks the following sponsors who have made donations to SC4 Friends of the Arts since Jan. 1, 2015:

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Special Awards for Writing and Art

Readers of *Patterns* will note that each year five special awards are given, named for past faculty members who had made extraordinary contributions to the arts and literature on campus and to *Patterns* in particular. The Blanche Redman, Richard Colwell and Kathy Nickerson Awards are given for the highest quality submissions for that year in poetry, fiction and essay writing, respectively. The Patrick Bourke and Eleanor Mathews Awards recognize students who have done exceptional work in a more general sense.

Eleanor Mathews Award

Kathleen McGowan

For over thirty years, the English faculty of SC4 has awarded the Eleanor Mathews Award for "outstanding creativity, technical skill, and individual style" to recognize student writers for overall achievement in creative writing. (By contrast, the Redman, Colwell and Nickerson Awards recognize the highest quality writing in each specific genre.) Traditionally the Mathews Award has been given to a deserving student who has had work published in *Patterns* in multiple genres and/or over a number of years. This year's Mathews winner is Kathleen McGowan, for her short story, "The Box," and her two poems, "Petals in the Metro Station" and "Anxiety."

Patrick Bourke Award

Emily Mainguy

The Patrick Bourke Award honors an art student who has made a commitment to pursue an advance degree in one of the visual arts disciplines and has been an advocate and emissary for art at St. Clair County Community College. This year's recipient is Emily Mainguy, who is currently completing her associate degree in graphic design. Emily is being honored for her dedication to the arts and for the exceptional quality and caliber of the work that she produces.



SHORT STORIES



RICHARD COLWELL AWARD

Return to Sender

Jason Justice

The sound of rolling waves crashing against rocks was caressed by the overlay of a melodic tune from a grand piano. The relaxing music bounced off the cathedral ceiling and echoed from the heights with cascading sound that covered up the noise from the busy streets below. Henry McAllistar could still hear the faint ringing of the trolley bell as it came up the hill and around the corner right outside his apartment every hour on the hour. The music played as he finished putting on his barber's apron.

Picking up a set of scissors he worked them back and forth a couple times as he approached the bench near the outside facing window. "Hold still, I don't want to take too much off the top like last time" he said. With determined focus and precision Henry held his breath. He steadied his extended right hand, focusing his all too clumsy coordination to make a quick precise motion. SNIP, SNIP. With two scissor snips he ceased. He then exhaled with a cheerful smile coming to his face. "All done, Herb! Should I put you on the books, let's say next Tuesday?" Henry walked around his friend admiring his work.

After a few heartbeats of silence Henry tilted his head to wait for a reply. "Fantastic!" he exclaimed, and with one quick motion, he bent down and picked Herb up to place the small bonsai tree back on the windows ledge. With both hands around the base of the pot, Henry was turning the tree to where he would get most light exposure, when there was suddenly three thunderous knocks at his front door

Startled, Henry almost sent the plant hurtling through the air. At the last moment he reigned in his fright and caught the tree with the crook of his bent arm. Again three raps at his door. Surprise turned to anger, glancing over at the clock perched atop of his bookshelf. He wondered who would be outside his apartment at such an early hour in the morning. After composing himself and setting down the plant, Henry walked down the long hallway to the thick reinforced steel door. Nearing the door, Henry pulled the apron over his head to hang on the coat rack; bristles fell from the top of his ruddy brown hair. The commotion at the door must have scared the thistles out of Herb as they now lay loosely on Henry's hair and upper arm.

Combing the remaining foliage from his hair, he bent down peering into the peephole. Expecting to see the disproportionate face of some neighbor with a far too intimate view of the underside of their nose, Henry was surprised to see… no one. He shifted his head left and right, extending his neck to peer into the farthest reaches of the viewing hole. There was no one to be seen. Henry then unlatched the top security

chain, then the bottom one, turned the third, fourth, fifth deadbolts with heavy clacks, and then thumbed the door handle lock as he turned the nob. Henry believed that it was better to have too many locks than not enough! He then cracked the door a few inches, peering into the shared apartment hallway. After a few moments with no signs of activity, Henry opened the door fully and looked down the length of the long hallway. His apartment was on the corner of the building, which provided privacy to one side, as he only had on neighbor. However, with this privacy, he had to endure the constant traffic of the stairway across the hall. With no signs of life, Henry stepped out into the hallway; it was then that he felt something connect against the tip of his shoe. Looking down, it was then that Henry realized the reason for commotion.

Against the base of his door lay a small package upside down, covered in brown wrapping paper. Henry picked it up, turning it as he examined it. The small cube fit into the center of his palm. The package was wrapped in an outturned brown grocery bag; the edges pressed neatly like a present with folded triangles pressed flat. There were with thin strips of clear tape crossed the median of the parcel on the opposite two sides. Along one side of the box written in delicate handwriting said "With Love." Henry's heart raced, taking in a deep breath, he was increasingly surprised and cautious as he continued to peer over the small parcel. As he turned the box exposing the top, all air deflated from his lungs as well as his whole being.

On the top of the parcel stamped in blocky red lettering was the phrase RETURN TO SENDER: ADDRESS UNKNOWN. Where the recipient address label would be, there was a sticky residue with the remnants of the destination address. He then glanced to the top left hand corner where white label for sender, had in the same delicate handwriting it was written: Cindy Wolliby - Westerly place, unit 311. Henry lived in unit 317 and was curious why the parcel was at his door. He saw that the unit number was smeared over the 1 and he could see how the address could have been mistaken. But then a sudden sinking feeling dropped in his stomach like a ton of bricks. He recognized the name…Cindy Wolliby. That was a woman who lived down the hallway from him for years, to whom Henry had not willingly ever have said a word to.

Henry suffered from a horrible affliction. He was terribly shy. From when he was a small child he had very few friends, save for Herb. He was especially shy around those of the opposite sex. It would be so bad sometimes that the anxiety would grip his chest to where he would fumble aimlessly with his words like a fool. As he grew older he became more comfortable with his shyness until he met Cindy.

Where Henry was shy, quiet, and awkward, Cindy was the exact opposite. She was alive like the fiery color of her auburn hair and wild emerald eyes. She was energetic

like the over-caffeinated customers she served at the local coffee shop, and graceful as he would sometimes see her practicing at the dance studio on his walks home from work. From when he first met her, when he held the door when she first moved in he was captivated by her presence. Instead of stumble to speak he could only nod in reply when she thanked him for holding the door.

That moment of embarrassment could have been enough for Henry but no! If by happenstance and God's sense of humor, she would continue to show up in Henry's life. First as a barista at his favorite café. When she asked what he would have he could only hold up three fingers to signal what he wanted. She would laugh and went to work quickly on his mochachokalattefrapee. From then on she would have his drink waiting for him. Cindy was very chatty, talking about anything that came to mind. When stuck in the elevator together Henry would stand in silence as Cindy would make light of the situation and provide enough conversation for both of them. Following which, Henry would quickly escape from the elevator to the haven of his apartment.

Henry dreaded having to drop off the parcel at the door. He considered his options for a moment. He knew that leaving the parcel outside the door was not the safest option. So he gained up the courage to walk down opposite end of the hall outside apartment 311. He could hear muffled voices coming from within the apartment so he did what any good neighbor would do. He dropped the parcel, lightly knocked and started to run for it. Only a few feet away, he heard the door whip open and he froze in place amazed at the reaction time to his knock. "What is this?" came the query of the voice that did not sound like Cindy. Henry spun around, and instead of seeing the girl from next door, he saw a short, elderly Asian couple with the wife holding the box in her hands. The woman glanced at the box and back at Henry, then back at the box. The wording "With Love." was facing upwards in the woman's hands. After a few glances she tossed the box at the feet of Henry stating in a thick accent "She does not live here anymore, boy toy." With disgust she then turned and entered into the apartment. The husband stood there for a few more moments and gave a smirk of approval and a wink as he then turned upon the command of his wife and closed the door. Henry reached down to pick up the box near his feet not sure what had just occurred. He didn't know if he should laugh or be angry at the rudeness of the woman. He walked back to his apartment lost in thought and upon properly securing his door; he glanced at the clock noticing that the courier's delivery had altered his daily routine and now verged on being late for work. Quickly he grabbed his jacket and leather satchel throwing the parcel on top of the stack of his architectural drawings.

On his walk to work he passed the café, glancing inside he saw a woman with her auburn hair put up in a bun. She was making some caffeinated concoction with her back to the counter. He continued to walk past but then quickly turned around to enter the café doors. Henry made it all the way to the front of the counter. He felt a slight courage in his soul; he fought to summon a fierce lion of courage but instead got a kitten. As he began to speak nothing came out. He tried again but could only clear his throat. Oblivious to his pathetic attempts at communication, she kept working lifting levers on the latte machine. As he placed the box on the counter he locked eyes with her. Instead of seeing the deep emerald pools he saw brown eyes that seemed foreign to him and distant. Who he thought was Cindy was a girl that looked remarkably close to her but definitely not her.

"Can I help you?" asked the barista. Looking into the dumbfounded look of her potential customer.

"Sorry, I thought you were someone I knew," Henry replied. Shrugging and picking up the box with one hand.

The barista noticed the box with the name on it and said "You know, this is my first week and you are not the first person who has given me that look. From what I know she quit before I got this job."

After mulling that over and cursing his luck, Henry spoke in a defeated tone "Any chance she may be coming back for her last check. This parcel was mistakenly left behind when she moved?"

"I don't think she is coming back any time soon. Sorry I can't help you." she then projected her voice to be heard by all "Order up for Steve!"

Henry exited the café, with his usual order in hand and took a small sip in attempts to not burn the roof of his mouth. He chuckled to himself; this was just his luck as he placed the small box back into his satchel and continued on his way to work. Later that day he stopped by the dance studio where he had seen Cindy from time. Of course to his luck it was closed. Lost in contemplation Henry sat on the front stoop to the studio. As he turned the box over and over in his hands he noticed the postal worker tending to his route a few businesses down. Filled with renewed energy, Henry jumped to his feet and ran to the postal worker. Henry did not know if the worker was jumpy or the fact that Henry towered over the rotund delivery man, but he jumped in surprise and clenched the mailbag close to his chest.

Henry exhaustively explained his situation. He knew around half way into the speech that things were not going well when he saw the postal workers eyes glass over as he bit the salt and pepper gray mustache with his bottom teeth. When Henry finished, the postal worker shrugged and said, "Can't help, no address". Henry tried to insist and asked

what else can he do? The man just continued to walk up the steps to the next house and place mail in the box brushing off the pleas by saying, "Pal, not be rude but it's not my problem." Ron pointed a handful of mail at the parcel in Henry's outstretched hand, "Keep it, open it, or throw it in that trash bin there, I don't care." With frustration subsiding from the postal workers face he brushed past Henry and with a heavy sigh said "Now it's getting late and I gotta get my route done okay?" Grabbing the next handful of mail Ron continued down the street into the next building.

With every few steps along his way home Henry turned the parcel over in his hand. The lightness of the parcel allowed Henry to roll it back and forth between his fingertips. As Henry approached a street corner just short of his apartment building, the glint of green metal caught his eye. Stopping, lost in thought, Henry realized after some time had passed, that he stood over a garbage can. He contemplated the Ron's words. He knew he could never open the parcel. That was completely out of the question. Which left him the option of either dropping the box into the trash here and now and be done with it, or continue to hold onto the box in hopes of one day ever finding the owner? After contemplating it in his head he tossed the parcel high into the air like a quarter. He caught the parcel in his right hand and placed it on the back of his left hand face down. He held his hand over the parcel four breaths more then lifted it up. On the side that was facing up was the words "With Love." Looking down at the delicate writing Henry Smiled. As a stiff breeze rustled leaves in an unseen vortex that whipped around his legs, He placed the box back into his satchel. Henry closed the flap gently patting the satchel on its side. Another day will bring another chance and hopes of God's happenstance. Renewed, Henry went upstairs to his apartment.



Funerals

Matthew Vallee

SECOND PLACE

I hate funerals. The solemnness, the awful crying, the depression which pervades throughout like a thick black fog, threatening to drag you down and smother you; I even hate the priest up there giving his sermon, and the old church ladies – you know, with their hair so white it's turned a slight shade of blue – muttering back and forth to themselves and condemning the poor soul who just died. The women wailing, their sobs echoing up towards the tall ceiling and bouncing back down again, the terrible shrillness making your hair stand on end and your heart turn to ice. The men, their faces like stone, standing erect and motionless, waiting to carry the coffin away to its final resting place. "It's okay," my dad whispers to my mom, trying to console her. "He's in a better place now." She nods, her eyes scrunched tight, trying to hold back the tears which flood down her face. I fidget uncomfortably, tugging at the tie around my neck. I hate this tie. I hate the suit I'm wearing. My grandfather worked forty years in a factory welding ladders. He of all people wouldn't care whether we dressed "nicely" for his passing or not. My grandma sitting next to me, tired but steady, doesn't show much emotion. Makes sense. I guess he cheated on her constantly throughout their marriage. The man came back from the war, had half a dozen kids, and got stuck in a menial, tedious factory job as a thank you for his service.

I glance at the doors, located so far away from the rest of the congregation; the blessed doors, portals which lead to fresh air and freedom and untold joy. The coffin, dark brown oak, lying in the center of church, with a picture of grandpa and some of his grandkids propped up next to it. I find myself studying the old man, short, spectacled and bald. I wonder what he wanted out of life that made him grow to be so bitter and resentful towards it. A bark of laughter almost escapes me and I just barely manage to stifle it. The man was a known atheist, and yet the priest presently sprinkles holy water on the casket, blessing it with the cross. I feel bad. I hate this damn depression, this sad bleakness which hangs over the place like a plague.

"So what if the man is dead?" I want to shout. "Every one of us is gonna die, one way or another!" I can't help this feeling though; this feeling that we shouldn't care so much about what happens in the afterlife, or how we should go about blessing the dead. We should acknowledge the deceased, but shouldn't we also celebrate their *life*? Not just for my grandfather, but mankind in general? People start to murmur now as the mass winds down, and a procession is formed to move

to the cemetery. I help my grandmother to her feet and gaze one last time at the picture. This won't be me someday. When I die I don't want others to mourn me. I don't want some big charade like this, with my corpse exhibited for the whole world to see and scorn and pity and contemplate. Just let me burn, and scatter my remains to the wind. As the good book tells us, we are dust, and to dust we shall return.





Something Lost

Shane Brockett

"Thump, thump, thump," came a pounding from the door.

"God damnit, what the hell is that noise?" Jim curses as he gets out of bed. Looking at the clock he realizes it is only 6:30 A.M.

"Anyone want to get that?" he shouts, but there was no reply.

"Thump, thump, thump," comes the quick pounding again.

"Fuck, okay, okay I'm coming hold your damn horses,"

He grabs a pair of shorts off the top of one of the random mountains of clothes around his room and puts them on. As he fumbles for the door handle and carelessly swings it open he stubs his big toe.

"Fuck! What the fuck, what a great way to start my day this better be good."

Stumbling out of his room, tossing a lock of his blonde hair from his face, rubbing the sleep from his still red and dry eyes, he moves through the living room towards the door.

"Thump, thump, thump," again comes that same pounding.

"Shit, I said hold on I'm coming," he yells as he wades through a sea of empty beer cans and old pizza boxes.

Unlatching the deadbolt he opens the door.

"What do…," he started to shout as he cut his sentence short. In front of him stood a lovely young blonde woman holding a box.

"Her eyes though," he thought to himself, "There is something so familiar about them."

"Oh, my apologies," he said in a bashful tone as he racked his brain to figure out what was so familiar about her, "What can I do for you?"

"That's fine," she stammered while averting the gaze of his steely blue eyes, "Ummm, I have to run but give this to your roommate please; it is a must that he gets it today."

He takes the box from her looking down at it for a name, but there was nothing on it. He looks back up to ask her who it was for but she was gone. Glancing down the hallway in either direction, and there was no one.

"Weird," he mutters to himself, "I have three roommates, who the hell is this for? And who was that woman. Man she was attractive. I swear I know her from somewhere."

He sets the box down on the kitchen table and went to see who was home. Checking each of his friend's rooms only to find them all empty, so he went back to the kitchen. He grabs a mug of coffee and sits down at the table to examine the box.

"I wonder what this is," he muttered to himself as he takes a sip from his mug. "It's not heavy, still taped, and it does not seem to have anything rattling around when I shake it. Well this is going to be a fun day off."

Moments later, after he gets dressed and ready for the day Joel walks in.

"What's up dude?" Jim asks.

"Not too much man just recovering from a long ass night," Joel replies.

"Nice man, good for you. Anyway so this pretty little blonde chick brought this box over this morning, and said to give it to my roommate and that he must get it today. Were you expecting anything? Jim asks.

"No, nothing that I was aware of. At least it better not be for me from some blonde girl; my girlfriend will have my ass if it was. Sorry though man, but I can't take that," Joel replies.

"It's cool man, hey do you know where Chaz or Andrew are today?" Jim asks, "It has to be for one of them.

"Yeah I'm pretty sure Andrew is working at The Nut House, and Chaz should be in class or on campus somewhere."

"Right on, thanks I'll catch you later on," Jim replies over his shoulder as he grabs his keys and heads out.

Hopping in his car, Jim decides to head downtown to The Nut House and see Andrew first. After getting stuck in traffic for thirty minutes on a normally ten minute drive he finally pulls in to The Nut House, and a nut house it is indeed. He ends up driving around the parking lot for over twenty minutes just trying to find a place to park. Once he walks inside absolute chaos surrounds. The local university's football team is playing today and nearly every table and seat at the bar is filled. Scanning impatiently over the crowd trying to spot Andrew, but to no avail. He walks up to the hostess and inquires as to where he was.

"Oh he just went on break, he should be out back," she replies.

"Okay, thank you."

Walking back outside now to go around to the back of the building, where he found

Andrew smoking by the back door.

"Hey dude, how's work going for you my friend?" Jim sneers sarcastically.

"Dude it is hell in there right now, what's up?

"Well this morning there was this cute little blonde chick who woke me up at 6:30 A.M. pounding on the damn door. She didn't say much or who this was for before she rushed off, but she said to give this box to my roommate and that he must get it today. Joel said it was not for him so you were the next stop on my list," Jim replies.

"Hmmm, that's weird, do you know what it is?" Andrew asks.

"No man, it is sealed up like it was in the mail and I can't for the life of me figure out what the hell it is," Jim replies, "Were you expecting something?"

"Not that I know of man, and honestly I haven't been with a blonde girl in a while. I have been on this brunette and red head kick lately, but I have run back to work I can't take that from you," Andrew replies.

"Shit, well I'm off to track down Chaz then it must be his."

"Well I know he should be getting out of his philosophy course in about twenty minutes. You should be able to catch him there."

"Thanks man, I'll catch you at home later on," Jim shouts as he heads back to his car.

"Alright Chaz's philosophy class is only five minutes from here I should be able to make it there before he gets out," Jim says to himself, as he starts his car and leaves the parking lot.

Not but two minutes away from Chaz's class Jim's car breaks down, and as the fates would have it, it starts to rain.

"Fuck, what the hell else could go wrong for me today, all because of this damn package."

After pulling his car off to the side of the road, he decides to just walk to campus and meet Chaz and get a ride home with him. Now Jim and the box are both soaking wet, though he tries his best to cover the box as he walks, but there is little he could do. He sits down on the steps outside of Chaz's class and waits. After a few minutes Chaz walks out and sees Jim sitting there.

"Hahahaha, what the hell happened to you man? You look like shit," Chaz says while laughing.

"Dude, this fucking box happened to me and ever since my day has been shit."

So Jim walks with Chaz to his car and explains the morning to him and the mysterious woman who left this box, as well as the events that followed.

"Interesting indeed man, it could have been this girl in my psychology class. Though she

was only supposed to be bringing me notes over for our next exam. Did she have glasses on?"

"Not that I noticed," Jim replies

"Hmmm, she could have been wearing contacts. Did she have a streak of red in her bangs?" Chaz asks.

"I really wasn't looking, but no not that I remember."

"Well then, I don't think I can take that from you it can't be for me. Besides I don't want any of the luck it has given you today," Chaz chuckles, "Do you need a ride back home?"

"No, I guess just take me back to my car."

Now back in his own car, soaking wet and rather irritated Jim sits and contemplates the box in his lap and what to do with it. With high hopes he tries to turn the car over once more, and it roars to life.

"Thank God," Jim breathes now thinking out loud, "You know what, no one I live with claimed this damn thing, and I have had nothing but bad luck since it arrived so I'm going to just toss on the fucking river and be done with it."

Coming up to the bridge, he pulls off to the side of the road and walks down to the center of the bridge. Pausing for a moment to stare at the box, he lets out a deep breath as he goes to throw the box over the edge.

"But why do I feel like I know that woman?" he questions as he stops himself from throwing it, "Shit, I have to open it. It will drive me nuts if I don't know who this is for or what it is. I'll open it when I get back home."

Tucking the box back under his arm Jim heads back to his car. The storm starts to pick up again, as thunder rolls in the distance. The hour grows late, as bullets of rain are firing off in all directions. Jim picks up his pace to get in to his car, as he does so he cracks his skull on the door panel.

"Fuck!" Jim cries, "This day has been shit all around. I swear that nothing good will come out of today."

Shuddering from the chill of his once again soaking wet clothing he fumbles to get the key into the ignition. After a few tries the car turns over and he begins to head home. Not but five minutes down the road the driver side windshield wiper flies off the side of the car.

"Come on, not again with this shit," Jim curses, "I hope I can fix this again."

He pulls off into a nearby gas station, driving with his head out the window so he can see. He hops out to inspect the damage while the rain relentlessly pelts any exposed flesh. After retightening the bolt he used to rig the wipers a few months back, he hops back in the car to see if his patchwork solution will hold. He turns the car over, but it only sputters. He tries once more but no luck, it was dead once more.

"Well if that isn't just perfect," Jim scoffed, "What the hell am I going to do now?"

At that same moment a bus pulls up a half a block away to let some passengers off.

"That will work I suppose," Jim sighs to himself as he grabs the box and locks his car and races off to catch the bus before it departs.

Once on board he grabs a seat near the map of the bus route. Once he has found the stop nearest his home he again turns his attention back to the box.

"I have thirty minutes at least before I reach my stop," he thinks to himself, "I simply can't wait, after everything I have been through today I have to open this now."

As frantic as a child on Christmas he claws and scratches at the tape sealing the box. Once the tape is gone he slowly opens the flaps and peers inside. Much to his surprise all that was inside was just a letter and a wallet sized photograph. He picks up the photo only to gaze at the face of a small blonde haired blue eyed boy. He couldn't have been more than three or four years old. On the back of the photo was a name and date, it reads: "James 2012."

Staring off into space for a moment Jim finally stammers, "None of this makes any sense."

"Sorry, what was that?" an older lady next to him asks.

"Oh, no nothing sorry," Jim replies, "I was just thinking out loud it seems."

Turning back to the box he reaches inside and pulls out the letter.

"Dear James,

If you are reading this then I apologize for not being able to say this to you in person. It has been so long since we have seen each other I fear I may not have the nerve to do so once I see you again. I hope I even have the nerve to tell you this box is for you once I do. I have sat wondering if you will even recognize me anymore. I know we didn't end on the best of terms. I do hope you will forgive me for leaving without saying goodbye. I never wanted you to hate me, but I knew you were not ready for what was coming. At the time I didn't think it fair to ask you to give up your dreams, so I felt it was best that I left. I regret doing so now, and I will understand if you choose to not reply to this message. I simply could not keep the truth from you any longer. The photo enclosed with this letter is that of your son, well our son. His name is James Allen after his father, and this was taken on his fourth birthday. I know what you must be thinking but I assure you he is yours. I never told you this because I thought it would push you away, but you were not only the first person I fell in love with; you were also the first and only

person I made love with. That is why I know he is your son. I don't expect anything from you. It was my choice to raise him on my own. I just felt you had a right to know. I can never express how sorry I am for keeping this from you, or for ever leaving you all those years ago. It has been a regret I have held in my heart every day since the day I left. I hope in time you will come to forgive me, and please know that I have always loved you.

Your love always,
Ashley Maroni

P.S If you choose to want to meet your son our address is 5172 Walnut Dr. Right down the street from the park in which we first met. I don't have a phone right now but feel free to stop by anytime."

His face goes stark white. A tear wells up in the corner of his eye, and cascades down the slope of his clenched jaw. He sits for a moment wringing his hands overwhelmed by everything he just took in.

"I have a son," he utters quietly.

"Are you alright?" the lady next to him asks, "You look affright child."

"I have a child," he stammered again before he could even think to stop the words from coming out, as he turns his eyes toward the woman.

"Well congratulations," she replies, "Is it a boy or girl?"

"A boy," he replies breathlessly, "I have missed so much, so many years."

He stands shakily and moves toward the front of the bus.

"Are you sure you're alright?" the woman called after him.

He didn't hear her. His mind was on the brink of explosion as his heart sank to the pit of his stomach. He was deaf to everything but his thoughts. Once to the front of the bus he grabs a brochure of all the bus routes for that company and begins searching madly. To flustered to think straight he turns to the driver.

"Excuse me sir," Jim almost whispers barley able to find his voice.

"Huh, what'd you say?" the driver asks.

"Do any of the busses go to Stonebridge by chance?"

"Nope, sorry son that's a ways outside of our services limits," the driver replies.

"I kind of figured that," Jim replies in a wavering tone, "Can you let me off here then?"

"My next stop isn't for a few blocks," the driver began before Jim cut him off.

"I need to stop now!" Jim shouts

"Okay, okay don't go getting your britches in a bunch son," The driver says as he pulls the bus to a halt.

Once off the bus Jim hails the first cab he sees.

"Where to my friend?" the cabby asks.

"5172 Walnut Dr. it's in Stonebridge"

"I know it," the cabby retorts, "But that's a pretty steep fare friend. We won't be there till morning.

"I don't care," Jim replies handing over his credit card, "Just get me there as soon as you can."

"You're the boss," the cabby sneers as the gleam of the card catches his eye.

Jim sits back and lets out a deep breath.

"What the hell am I doing?" he thinks to himself, "What the hell am I going to say when I get there."

The thoughts continue to ravage his mind until he is completely exhausted from the day.

"Wake me before we get there," Jim says to the cabby as he thinks about the miracle that has been bestowed upon him from this tragic day, "I need to stop and get a gift for my son."

"Sure thing friend, you get some rest," the cabby replies as he merges back into the street.



The Box

Kathleen McGowan

Although Jack had only left the comfort of his friends' company moments ago, a familiar feeling began to arise in his chest once again. Despite having lived in New York City for almost seven years Jack still felt strange walking alone through the city; millions of people around but no one to guide him. He was just starting to admire the ripe, green leaves of the planetrees when a sudden force knocked his paper coffee cup from his hand causing the remaining few ounces of liquid to splash onto the sidewalk. Startled, he turned around to see who had run into him but the person was already sprinting away down the street and before Jack could formulate the words to shout anything after him it was too late. The street was crowded and the perpetrator had easily slipped out of sight. As he bent over to retrieve his fallen cup, Jack furrowed his brow at the sight of a small package resting on the ground at his feet. Picking it up he realized that it was just larger than his hand, a perfect undamaged cube covered completely in clear packaging tape. He was one who frequently enjoyed placing orders online and he could only imagine what the contents of a box that size might be. His first instinct was to deliver it to the nearest post office, as he had hoped they might have some way of identifying the owner of whatever could be found inside the perfect package.

His phone's GPS located a post office just three blocks from where Jack's feet were currently planted, beside a small patch of pale white trilliums. He did not need the directions being offered to him by a female voice emitting from his phone's speaker, as he had recognized the post office was only a few doors down from the pizza place that he worked at when he was still in school. Old instincts seemed to pick up his feet placing one in front of the other he was so familiar with the walk that he didn't have to think about where he was going and that cleared up enough space in his head for him to wonder what was in the package. Holding his phone beside the box, which was only slightly longer than his Samsung galaxy, he thought it was possible that it contained a new cell phone. He found it strange that the box didn't seem to have any type of label on it whatsoever even upon closer inspection he could not seem to track down any marks of residue left behind from a sticker that had possibly been removed. If a company were shipping something like an expensive electronic device it seemed unlikely to him that they would send it off in a blank, unmarked box. His line of thought came to a halt with his feet as he looked up at the flickering florescent sign that read "Pappy's Pizza" in glowing green lights. Jack let

out a sigh of relief knowing he wasn't there to put on a grease stained apron and take orders from sweaty, angry customers. Although he so enjoyed the company of others, the way people treated him while he worked there was far from friendly but he had no trouble responding kindly to their hostility.

He picked his feet back up and shuffled along the few necessary steps it took to bring him to the post office door. He opened the door to see a line of people leaving just enough space for him to slide in at the end and still have enough room to close the door. He would have thought a post office in such a large city would have a waiting area large enough for more than four people. A girl who looked to be in her early twenties turned around, her sandy blonde hair sending off notes of coconut that floated through the space between them and wafted into Jack's face all at once. She smiled, her cheeks so full they caused her eyes to squint into tight almond shapes.

"It's a nice day to spend in a post office, isn't it?" she said, gesturing to the puffy envelope clutched in her left hand; "I'm mailing a shirt to my sister in Wisconsin. You know, one of those typical 'I heart NY' tourist shirts. What about you?" she inquired, her eyes drifting down to rest upon the box in Jack's hand.

"Oh, I uh, I found this and I'm just trying to get it to its rightful owner. I don't even know what it is…" Jack trailed off.

The girl's eyes widened with curiosity but Jack simple shrugged in return. She opened her mouth to speak but a different voice resonated through the air "Ma'am, you're next."

She turned around sending ribbons of coconut through the air once again, after placing her package on the scale she turned her head slightly to say "Good luck" before handing over some cash and swiftly exiting the close quarters of the post office.

Jack stepped up to the counter unsure of what to say, the elderly woman behind the desk looked at him expectantly with a pair of sad eyes. "I'm not sure who this belongs to but I was hoping you would help me find its owner." Jack said placing the box onto the glass counter displaying rows of various, colorful stamps.

"I'm sorry" the clerk replied, examining the box "there is no indication of where this package should be delivered, I'm not sure what it is that you were expecting me to do but I can't just keep it here."

She slid the box toward Jack whose face had drooped as he sighed. "My apologies, I didn't mean to waste your time." He picked the box up and walked back out to the street where he spotted a bench where he could collect his thoughts.

Jack wondered what he had expected the post office to do with an unmarked package as he hung his head in embarrassment. He felt someone sit down beside him but he didn't lift his head until the wind blew the smell of coconut under his nose. There was the girl from the post office smiling at him.

"My name's Emily, maybe I can help you."

"Jack." He replied, a puzzled look forming on his face.

"My cousin is a psychic," Emily whispered leaning in close to Jack's face.

Emily noted Jack's hesitance upon her mentioning a psychic and the brief look that appeared on his face made it clear to her that he didn't seem to believe in psychic powers.

"Let's go then!" he finally said trying to match her initial enthusiasm.

Emily could tell that he wasn't actually as excited as his response made him seem. She couldn't figure out why he would go along with her idea and pretend to be thrilled about it. She wondered why he was going through so much trouble over a mysterious box anyway, but not letting Jack onto her suspicions she smiled and showed him the way.

The lounge of the psychic's shop was thick with the musty scent of the carpet and old, thick tapestries lining the walls. They were able to get in immediately because she claimed she could sense that Emily was on her way and she immediately cleared up her schedule, but based on the vacancy of the lobby there didn't seem to be anyone eagerly waiting to see Madame. Emily took the box from Jack's hands and placed it on the small doily in the center of the round table before them as she explained to her cousin that they were seeking out the owner of the mysterious box. Emily could see that Jack was nodding along to her cousin's words but his eyes showed no interest; he was just going through the motions.

"What do you suggest we do?" Emily asked Madame.

"Take the package to the person who has helped you most in your life" she responded in a hushed tone looking directly toward Jack.

"Thank you for your help." Emily smiled, and together they walked out of the candlelit room and through the door, where they both took a large breath of fresh air after breathing in age old dust.

"So who are we taking this to?" Emily asked gesturing to the box.

"Oh" Jack said "I was really hoping you would have someone in mind…"

"This is up to you Jack" Emily said, realizing that he struggled with handling tasks on his own. He had been riding on the coattails of her ideas whether he even thought they were helpful or not. Emily wanted to help Jack and she thought she might be able to coax him into his own independence.

"Who has helped you the most, Jack?" She looked into his eyes.

Jack looked startled at first but when his face relaxed he sighed "My grandfather."

"Then let's go to him"

"He's dead. I moved out here to live with him when he started getting weak, we made a great team up until he passed away three years ago."

Emily perked up slightly "Is he buried nearby?"

Jack looked confused "Yeah just a few blocks down."

"Let's go" Emily took his hand.

"Why? He can't help us now." Jack said solemnly.

"I don't know but you finally thought of something so let's go." She looked to him to lead them.

"My ideas are usually no good." Jack started but Emily interrupted him with a chuckle.

"Maybe you just don't act on enough of them."

They reached the rusted black gate and walked under the arched entrance. Jack led them through the cemetery, dragging his feet through the mounds of dirt and grass until he came before the stone he was looking for.

They stared at the grave in silence until Jack finally said "Grandad, you always knew what to do. What do I do?" He sat the box down in the grass in front of him and lowered his head into his hands. "What am I going to do with this box?" he finally asked out loud.

Emily could see that Jack seemed distressed and she finally asked "why are you making such a big fuss over something so small? It's just a box, you'll never know what to do with it until you open it."

"You're right" Jack said with confidence, a tone that Emily had not yet heard him use. "That was my first instinct, but I thought I must have been wrong. I wanted someone else to tell me what to do so it wouldn't be all my fault if I messed up, but even after all of that I still have to take responsibility for my actions. I should have just done this from the start."

Jack picked up the box with shaking hands and began to peel the tape away from the raised piece on its corner. Carefully he pulled back layers of tape until the box was bare and the lid was slightly popped open. He folded back each flap individually and once the final flap was opened he looked down to see what was inside, and there was nothing.

"All of that for nothing" Jack sighed.

"You should have just gone with your first thought, you would have never ended up here." Emily touched his shoulder.

"I might be more upset if it hadn't led me to a beautiful girl who helped me learn a lot about myself, all in just one day." He winked.

Emily's face turned rose red and Jack thanked her with a kiss.

A Man Walks Into a Bar

Jennifer Rostoni

The blizzard-burned door stung his weathered hands as he opened it. The inside of the establishment smelled of burned plastic from a freshly opened space heater, and the heat sparked him like a lit match on a dry twig. "Shit," he shivered as the heat left goosebumps down his spine. He walked toward the crowd of people and made his way to the bar, taking a seat. He checked his watch: 7 P.M., only 11 more hours before he had to be back to the shop. He ran his calloused hands over his eyes.

"Rum and coke," he shouted as he motioned to the bartender. He peered over his right shoulder as he took his first swig and noticed a clique of women. That's when he saw her. "Well, I'll be damned," he muttered before choking on his liquor. She was the most beautiful thing he'd ever laid his eyes on. "Who is she?" he whispered to himself.

The girl Ryan gazed upon had long, bombshell-blonde locks that stopped right above her hip. Her eyes were a light icy blue that could instantly freeze any admirers. She appeared to be so carefree; every song shocked her with excitement as she danced to the beat. It seemed as if nothing could prevent her from taking advantage of the night's promising fun. There was something about her he could not ignore, something that made him feel like he had to meet her.

"Excuse me? Sir? Sir!" the bartender barked.

"Sorry; what was that?" the man mumbled, attempting to clear his head.

"That'll be $7.50," the bartender chuckled.

"You'll have to excuse my stupidity. I lost myself for a second," the man ashamedly admitted.

"You don't have to explain anything to me sir. I saw you looking over there. I know what you were doing, or should I say, who you were thinking about doing," the bartender said sarcastically.

"You know her?" the man asked as he anxiously awaited the answer.

"Yes sir, I do. That's Aubrey. Aubrey White. She's fresh out of college, just moved back here a few months ago from Ann Arbor," the bartender explained.

"The blonde one?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did you know I was staring at her?" the man questioned.

"You're not the only one who's asked," the bartender replied.

"Get me another and start a tab under Ryan, and get me five vodka lemonades for her and her friends."

"You got it, Ryan," he snorted.

Ryan finished his rum and coke in one swallow and started on his second. He watched as the women asked who bought their drinks and hid when the bartender pointed in his direction. All of the girls stared at Ryan and giggled except Aubrey. She grabbed the drink off of the platter, winked at Ryan, and kept on dancing.

Once the rum gave Ryan enough courage to address the women, he started heading their way. He had to know something, anything about Aubrey.

"Excuse me, ma'am?" He reached toward Aubrey but was pushed back by one of her shorter brunette friends.

"Hey there, Sexy. You wanna dance?" she slurred as she grabbed him and tugged at his shirt.

"No, actually I don't," he sneered as he stepped aside, looking for Aubrey in the crowd.

"I'm not asking you again. Dance with me!" she shouted over the loud music.

"I'm not in the dancing mood," he said angrily, blowing her vodka breath out of his nostrils.

"What the hell is your problem? If a pretty lady asks you to dance, you don't turn her down."

"Well then I guess that tells you something about whether or not I think you're good looking," he remarked.

"Fuck you!" she screamed as she splashed her almost empty drink into his face.

After balling his fists up and taking a deep breath he side-stepped the drunk bitch and continued to search for his dream girl. He blinked several times to clear the fog from his tired blue eyes. There she was, her blonde hair shimmering under the DJ's lights. He couldn't help but smile.

"What do you want from her?" another voice slowly questioned.

"Are you talking to me?" Ryan retorted, staring at the young woman now standing next to him.

"My name's Jessica. Pleasure to meet you," she stated as she stuck out her hand to shake his. "Aubrey's been my friend for years, and I make sure to keep an eye out for all of the guys that gawk over her every week. She's like a sister to me," she explained. "So, what do you want from her?"

"I just want to talk to her," he begged, his forehead forming wrinkles as he squinted to see her again.

"Well that's not going to be easy," Jessica promised.

"Why not?" Ryan retorted.

"Because you're going to have to get through me first. I saw that drunk girl all over you. I'm not that easy to get away from," she remarked as she flashed him a wink.

"I have to talk to her. There's this mysteriousness about her. I can't leave without knowing who she is, where she's from, and what she's all about."

"And this is why I screen guys before they even get close to her. She's had too many heartbreaks, and I need to protect her from smooth talkers like you," she commented.

"I swear I don't want to hurt her. I'll do anything."

"Okay, okay," she heard herself say as she questioned her next move. "You'll do anything, huh?"

"Yes, I promise," he pleaded.

"We'll see about that, but like I said, it's not going to be easy" she teased while running her dainty fingers across his broad shoulder.

"What is that supposed to mean?" he laughed as he looked into her chocolate brown eyes for the first time.

"It means that I might want you as much as you want Aubrey," Jess taunted as she placed his hands on her curvy hips.

Suddenly, time appeared to stop. Ryan's eyes locked onto Jessica's. Her short, brown hair rested right above her tan freckled shoulders. Her hips caressed his hands like they were sculpted for each other, and her bright, white smile stopped all thoughts of Aubrey in his drunken mind.

Jessica whispered in his ear, and he felt prickles move down his spine. They talked for what seemed like hours as she studied him, staring at his short, dirty blonde hair, then moving to his toned arms before examining his rugged work boots. She looked back up at him, and he locked eyes with her. "You're so beautiful," he heard himself say. She raised an eyebrow trying to decipher what he had said over the loud music. He inched even closer to her.

"I feel so stupid. I was so mesmerized that I almost missed out on meeting you," he confessed.

"It's okay. I didn't let that happen," she flirted as she leaned in for the first kiss.

He looked down at Jessica and back up at the crowd. The once named princess, Aubrey, now appeared to be just another girl. He gazed back into Jessica's eyes and kissed her with more passion than he had ever kissed any girl before. She sighed after his lips released her, shocked by their power.

"Can I buy you another drink?" Ryan asked politely.

"Perhaps another vodka lemonade," she giggled as they walked hand-in-hand toward the bar.





ESSAYS

KATHY NICKERSON AWARD

Ordering the Irrational Darkness Poe's Temperament and Perspective

Therese Majeski

Portraying darkness, rational analysis, and lost love in a morass of ideas that occasionally seem to conflict, the stories and poems of Edgar Allen Poe offer insight into the character of their author. Certainly, the darkness and longing in much of Poe's writing may be interpreted as reflecting his own troubled life. Yet beyond this fairly self-evident observation, numerous instances within Poe's works may reflect the intricacies of his temperament. Indeed, many of Poe's stories and poems express passionate or irrational emotions that are nevertheless bounded by strict method and form; this intriguing contrast may indicate a temperament-based desire to bring order from disorder and hint at Poe's own melancholic perception of the world.

Likely the possessor of a profoundly melancholic temperament, at least judging by the sentiments present in many of his stories and poems, Poe evidently found expression for elements of his character through his writing. Marked by a propensity for brooding and an inherent desire for order, Poe's melancholic temperament was likely a contributing factor in his internal torments. It seems fairly apparent, then, given Poe's nature and inclination for expressing his turmoil through writing, that facets of his temperament may be determined from forms in his work. Indeed, profound and erratic emotions are dominant in many of his stories and poems, yet held in check by structure and method. Perhaps this indicates a melancholic desire on Poe's part to control his psychological state through the medium of the written word; possibly he gained a measure of vicarious relief by binding irrational emotions, as turbid as his own, within the constraints of the reasoned structures apparent in much of his writing.

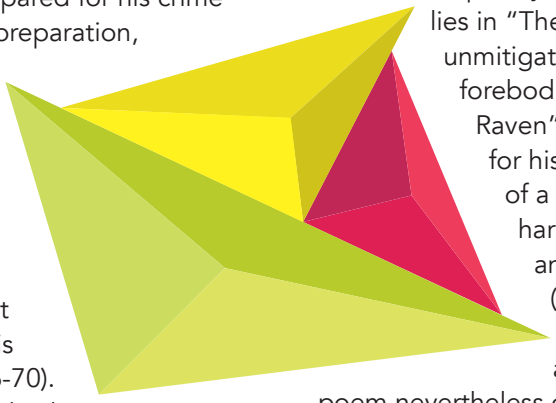
While manifest in many of Poe's short stories, the binding of irrationality with structure is perhaps best demonstrated in two of the author's more prominent works of prose, "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado." Both stories render similar accounts, each depicting a heinous murder motivated by unreasonable emotions or thought processes. Yet, even as the tales relate the actions of murderers who are slaves to their own darker and less sane passions, Poe nevertheless seems to impose a strict method on the actions of the villains and even a notable structure on the stories themselves. Essentially, "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado"

encapsulate Poe's attempts to order that which cannot be ordered; human passions that are inherently chaotic are at least limited through the structures in which they are presented.

Written in analogous formats, "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado" each contain notably comparable progressions of events that may be indicative of Poe's desire to order the erratic. In truth, both narratives are structured in parallel and ordered ways, with each story unfolding the actions of its protagonist in the same three phase sequence. First in both stories comes the stage where the murderer contemplates and plans his crime. Montresor of "The Cask of Amontillado" and the nameless madman in "The Tell-Tale Heart" each satisfies this element of their narratives. Montresor states that his intended victim has grievously wronged him but offers no corroboration for these nebulous slights, implying that the supposed wrongs could very well be imaginary and thus irrational, and asserts his intent to dispatch the object of his hatred "with impunity" (Poe 666). Montresor's fellow aggressor, the unnamed murderer of "The Tell-Tale Heart" likewise expresses his lethal intentions, basing his desire to kill on a wholly irrational hatred of his elderly companion's damaged eye and resolving to assassinate the old man as he sleeps (Poe 445-46). Swiftly following this first narrative stage comes the second, during which both murderers actually enact their crimes. Each conforms to this element of their narratives, Montresor by chaining Fortunato in the alcove to die and the nameless madman by smothering his aged companion (Poe 670-1, 447). Finally, in both narratives comes the point where the murderer is stricken by a certain measure of guilt. This semblance of contrition is certainly not fully developed in either individual. Montresor appears to suppress and deny what little remorse he experiences as he enacts his deed; nevertheless, as he completes Fortunato's entombment he claims that his "heart grew sick," implying he did experience at least slight guilt (Poe 671). The madman of "The Tell-Tale Heart" also undergoes an almost unconscious guilt. His, however, manifests in a hallucinatory certainty that others must know of his crime (Poe 448). Hence, Poe seems to make an effort towards ordering the irrational passions of his villains through relating "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado" in a controlled format.

Similarly, through their own actions, Poe impresses order on the frenetic motivations and emotions of the murderers in "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado." In a fascinating twist of irony, both men, although driven by chaotic hatred and revenge, nevertheless follow strictly meticulous methods of action as they embark on their misdeeds. Each killer proceeds with utmost care, planning every step and conforming his unbounded passion to an ordered and premeditated plan of action. The homicidal madman in "The Tell-Tale Heart," for example, painstakingly avoids raising suspicion

in his victim, treating the old man with even more consideration than customary and going to great lengths to be methodical in his nefarious plan; his care is so extreme that he spends hours simply creeping towards the old man's bed and is able to dismember the body without leaving a trace of blood (Poe 445-7). Likewise, Montresor from "The Cask of Amontillado" is clearly portrayed to have prepared for his crime both well and in detail. This preparation, for example, is evident in the care Montresor uses in manipulating Fortunato, in the way he ensures his servants are absent on the night of the murder, and in how he assures in advance that the tools of entombment will be readily available for his reprehensible deed (Poe 666-70). Montresor proceeds with method in almost every instance, even having availed himself of a mask for the purposes of disguise as he lures Fortunato to his doom (Poe 668). Thus Poe skillfully employs at least a partial limiting of the two murderers' disordered and vehement passions by filtering them through precisely executed methods that bring a measure of regulation.



Poe, however, does not merely employ structure for ordering the disordered and chaotic emotions in his short stories, but also in several of his more prominent poems. Poems such as "The Raven" and "The Bells" contain deep and maelstrom-like emotions that are presented within controlling structures. In the case of his poetry, some of Poe's imposed structures are those of rhyme, stanza length, repetition, and parallelism. Essentially, although Poe's poems express emotional sentiments that venture into irrationality, he constrains these sentiments within rational poetic forms and conventions.

Perhaps the best example of Poe's use of form within poetry to restrain raging emotion lies in "The Raven." A poem of unmitigated longing, burgeoning foreboding, and suspense, "The Raven" juxtaposes a man's pining for his lost lover with the arrival of a sinister raven, likely a harbinger of evil, despair, and perhaps even madness (Poe 72-4). Despite overt emotions of loss, sorrow, and eventually fear, the poem nevertheless operates within strict parameters. Although the poem's principal eventually loses all semblance of self-control, passionately and fearfully railing against the raven, calling it a "thing of evil" and likening it to a demon, Poe ensures the desperation remains in check through the use of consistent stanzas and a constant pattern of rhyme (74). Indeed, every stanza of "The Raven" is precisely six lines in length, with each stanza ending in shorter lines that echo each other in rhyme (Poe 72-4). Similarly, each stanza is hemmed by a constant A/B/C/B/B/B pattern of rhyme prominent at the end of each line (Poe 72-4). Further, Poe scholar Edward H. Davidson points out a clean split in tone at the exact middle of the 108 line poem; the preceding section is marginally lighter in

tone while the latter assumes an impression of insanity (117). This split suggests highly conscious method and structuring on Poe's part, manifesting in a guiding of events; Poe maintains a firm grip on "The Raven," directing it to impart a melancholy message without surrendering utterly to the poem's wild sentiments. Despite a gloomy, fevered, and despairing tone, together with an atmospheric "midnight dreary" and a passionate love for a departed woman, Poe throughout "The Raven" nevertheless succeeds in confining these frenzied emotions within a cage of form (72).

Like "The Raven," Poe's poem "The Bells" depicts frenetic emotion in a frame of structure, albeit less overtly. Form is nonetheless present, and despite the sentiments of the poem, firmly asserts its existence. An ultimately cacophonous piece, "The Bells" displays the vastly different voices of bells of various types, beginning with cheerful sleigh bells and devolving to rusted iron bells madly sounded by inhuman creatures (Poe 87-90). "The Bells" expounds a vast range of potent emotions, scaling from euphoria to despairing torment and each sentiment present in the poem carries a power in need of limitation. Interestingly, the format of "The Bells" parallels the structure of "The Raven" in that both poems possess a notable divide in tone at their center; while the divide in "The Bells" is not at the numerical midpoint regarding number of lines, it nevertheless, like "The Raven," marks a shift between light and dark (Davidson 117). Clearly, Poe found such a structured switch to be beneficial in controlling the flow of impassioned feelings. Additionally, "The Bells" possesses form through parallelism and word repetition. Poe traces a unifying thread throughout the entire piece, not only with the constant repetition of the word "bells," but also by referring to the bells in stanzas both one and four as "Keeping time...In a sort of Runic rhyme" (87-9). Although the first and last stanzas of the poem could not be more dissimilar, the first expressing near joy and the last radiating terror and misery, the repetition suggests that Poe was bringing order to the disorderly elements of "The Bells" by means of parallel ideas and phrasings. Finally, all four stanzas of "The Bells" exhibit a notable structural comparability because "The first three lines of each stanza are exactly the same metrically and structurally, although some words change" (Cummings Study Guide). This commonality amongst stanzas endows the poem with a formatted stability. Essentially, regardless of the turbulent subject matter, Poe in "The Bells" once again gains a measure of success in arresting almost immeasurable emotion through structure.

Admittedly Poe's works do not universally betray a significant desire to order erratic emotions. Yet, many of Poe's darkest tales and most wistful poems, those that offer glimpses into his personal troubles and torments, frequently display tumultuous emotions limited within settings of structured boundaries. Such groupings hold a certain import. The mere fact that such patterns of restricted irrationality are present in the stories and poems most

expressive of their author's soul implies that Poe used them to restrict his own demons. Essentially Poe seems torn between the two extremes of his melancholic nature, divided between melancholic obsession and ratiocination, and strives to reconcile this conflict through limiting the emotional chaos within his more personally revealing writings.

Hence because Poe was demonstrably melancholic, he was ruled by both reason and his own peculiar predilection for the broodingly morose, and thus often excessively emotional, thought processes; the writer's temperament caused him to invariably perceive the world as a place of darkness, tragedy, and danger. As a result, and because of his nature, Poe's only recourse, then, was to order and limit that which defied order and limitation. Driven by his temperament, Poe although unable to completely quell chaos, either within himself or in the world, nevertheless employed order and form to good effect. The disorder and darkness within were effectively held in check by the order and form without.



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SECOND PLACE

A Day in the Life of a Depressed Little Shit

Lydia Nicholas

You're worthless.

"Stop."

Nobody likes you.

"Please!"

You're pathetic.

"But I thought…"

You thought wrong. You are nothing.

"What did I do to deserve this suffering?"

You were born.

3:51 A.M. glowed brightly on my alarm clock. The room was as silent as death but in my mind, it was a New York City subway station during rush hour on a Friday; so much noise – so many voices… I closed my eyes, praying to whatever god would listen to make the voices stop, pleading for some sense of normality.

I picked up my lighter and twirled it around, wondering where it would lead me.

"Weed?"

Not now.

"Cigarette?"

Maybe… How about something more self-destructive?

I lit a stale cigarette from the pack I kept hidden beside the bed. As I dragged on it, I took time to think of all the things I had done wrong in life, of why I'm such a horrible person: I should not have said those things to him, if I did not go back to that place I would not have been raped, I deserve this abuse, I deserve worse; death would be a privilege. I sobbed to myself, repeating all those wrongdoings aloud, remembering I am not a good person and I deserve all this suffering.

As my cigarette came to an end, I braced myself. I was about to give in to that nagging voice in my head.

Do it. You're ugly anyway. Might as well make yourself uglier.

I took the cigarette, embers still glowing, and pressed it against my thigh. I bit my tongue hard, trying not to cry as my skin was burning. I slowly pulled the butt away from my leg and admired the ashy burn I had just given myself.

Again.

I relit what was left of the cigarette and pressed it once more into my thigh, internally

listing all the reasons why I deserved this searing pain. I could not help it anymore. I could not handle this internal pain any longer, so I brought the pain to the physical realm where maybe somebody, anyone, would confirm that my suffering is real and that I was not making it up. It was my cry for help that would be hidden underneath pants and shorts so nobody would see it.

I peeled away the now crumpled butt from my thigh and gazed upon my new twin burns. It looked like I had finally made it to the point of third-degree burns (experts say third-degree burns require medical attention, but the voices in my head told me otherwise). I rubbed my other thigh, covered in cuts from previous episodes of the freak show that is me, still recovering from the pain I put myself through before tucking myself in for a mere hour of sleep.

6:27 A.M. now flashed on my alarm clock; I had overslept yet again. Could I not do anything right? I downed my medications and got dressed, throwing on a pair of sweatpants and a T-shirt as my mother and sister yelled at me to hurry up. I ran out to the car in my socks in the rain with my purse, backpack, and shoes in hand. What a great start to my day!

The half-hour drive into town was uneventful, as always. It was just more time for me to think of more reasons not to like myself. After I had dropped my sister off at school and my mother at work, I took the car to the Tim Horton's drive-thru.

"Hi, can I get a vanilla dip donut, a chocolate chip muffin, and a chocolate milk please?"

Fat-ass.

I pulled through and got my food without another word, but faked a smile to be polite. I waited until I got to the college to eat. Once there I parked my car (as there is prime parking at 7:30 A.M.) and sat there and ate while wallowing in my own self-pity. Once I finished, I reclined my seat back, curled up, and sobbed.

"What am I doing with my life?"

Nothing, because that is all you're good for: nothing. Why do you even try? What's the point? You'll never get into Michigan Tech. You'll never do anything meaningful with your life. You'll never be pretty. You'll never be lovable. You are going to die alone.

The voices in my head just would not stop. They were relentless. I slid my hand down the leg of my pants and scratched at the burns I had left the night before, hoping the pain would make them stop. Eventually, the voices hushed so I made my way into the library to retreat to my schoolwork. I had a paper due that day in my English class that I had yet to write, so I figured that would be a good place to start.

It was the same routine I followed every day: breakfast, homework, class, with some overwhelming anxiety and crying scattered throughout. However, some days I would not go to class. I figured, what is the point of going? I am an idiot and a failure. I used to be praised for how smart I was, so much more so than my peers. Now I am average at best. Who likes average?

I made my way to English, anxious to get the day over with. I sat and doodled throughout the discussion, half paying attention, half wishing I had not woke up that morning. After English was physics, but I decided going was pointless; I would fall asleep and would not pay attention anyway. I went over to my friend's house instead. He was at work, so I had the house to myself. I curled up in his bed, unsure of what else I could do. The scars on my wrists seemed to glow in the mid-day light.

You're hideous. Covered in scars and cuts and burns. Who could ever love a thing like that? Gross! You can't do anything right. You can't even do school right. You don't have friends, they use you, and you allow them to. You're trash.

The voices continued as I cried and hit myself in the head, reminding myself of my stupidity. Time flew. My phone now showed the time as 3:08 P.M.. I pulled myself together enough to slightly function and drove to pick up my mom and sister from work. My brain was on autopilot, too overcome by emotions to think otherwise.

I retrieved them and drove home as quickly as I could, ready for this horrid day to come to an end.

"What do you want for dinner?" my mother asked.

"Nothing. I'm not hungry" I responded as I shut myself into my room.

Fatty. You're right to not eat. If you don't eat long enough you might finally lose weight. Maybe then you'll be pretty.

I undressed and took my nightly medications before crawling into bed. With the shades drawn and the doors shut, the glowing alarm clock was the only light in the room. I laid and stared at the ceiling, unsure of what else to do. I ran my thumb over my burns again and cringed. Emotions flooded through me: pain, anger, regret, but mostly fear. I was alone and utterly terrified – I was scared of myself, the freak show that is I, the monsters in my head, and there was nothing I could do about it. I dozed off soon after, yet again lost in my head.

3:51 A.M. glowed brightly on my alarm clock.

You're pathetic.

"Here we go again…"

THIRD PLACE

Devin

Madison Magness

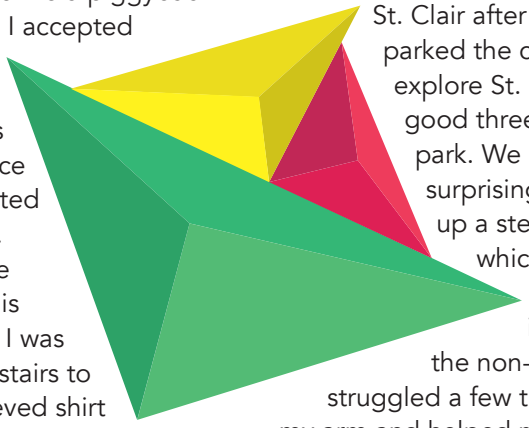
Stomach tied in knots, I walked with confidence to the rusted swing-set where a boy with long, flowy hair sat swinging alone. "Hey, nice to properly meet you!" I said eagerly as I sat on the swing adjacent to him. The next few hours were spent climbing the massive East China Hill. Sitting on the top of the world, the sun cascaded down upon my paper white legs. We talked about our interests, random things, and life. Who would have known that this somewhat awkward first encounter with this strange, but stunning boy would turn into the best summer of my life, filled with romance, thrill, and adventure?

One A.M. rolled around as the clock ticked. A few weeks had passed since I hung out with Devin last. Filled with boredom and desire to go on an adventure, my phone lit up, and the name Devin flashed across the screen. After a brief, "Hello, what's up?" I confided in him how bored I was, and he replied, "Do you want me to pick you up for an adventure?" Suddenly, an angelic version of me appeared on my right shoulder and a devilish one on the left. The angel me was very convincing in putting the fear of consequences from these actions into my brain, but not as convincing as the red devil in a little black dress, urging me to take the chance to have some fun.

My heart raced as I waited for the call to signal me to start walking to the end of my road to the red Lincoln. I quietly slipped into my mother's tan moccasins and opened the backdoor that screeched with every bit of pressure applied to the door handle. A single street lamp illuminated the fork in the road. As I got in the car all of my fear vanished and excitement took over. "Have you ever explored an abandoned house before?" Devin asked slyly. A million butterflies fluttered in my stomach, as a sense of exhilaration pumped through my veins. I had never done anything remotely similar to this, but I thought, "What the heck, why not?"

I punched the address into my phone and off we were on our midnight quest. As we pulled into the long gravel driveway, an old, decrepit house loomed in the corner of the property, enclosed in overgrown bushes with vines that clung to the deteriorating wood of which the house was composed of. The sky resembled black velvet, stars watched us from above as Devin dimmed the lights and put the car in park. The smell of damp grass consumed me and I realized that moccasins were not the best shoe choice for this particular adventure. Walking through the misty grass, we approached the back of the house where the glassless bay window seemed to lock eyes with me. I felt like Alice looking into the rabbit hole, curious of what mysteries awaited inside. Devin climbed in with ease, he extended his hand and pulled

me into the house. Mattresses, furniture, and miscellaneous knickknacks consumed each room. Tiptoeing down the hall, Devin's flashlight revealed broken beer bottles that scattered the floor, remnants of others who had snuck their way inside before us. We explored each room laughing loudly, rounding each new corner with excitement of the unknown. We exited the house the same way we came in. My mother's moccasins were drenched from the dew on the tall grass. Devin offered to give me a piggyback ride back to the driveway, and I accepted gleefully. Climbing back into the car, I realized I was parched. Most all of the stores in Marine City were closed since it was 2 A.M, so Devin suggested we go to his house for a drink. Opening the door to his house I recall mentioning how cute his kitchen was, and how nervous I was of his mom coming down the stairs to a girl in an oversized long-sleeved shirt and messy hair. He took out a mason jar from the white, wooden cupboard and walked to the sink to fill it with the clear elixir. Satisfaction filled my dehydrated body as the water passed through my lips and down my esophagus.



Following a few more times of hanging out, Devin confessed that he liked me. I had just gotten out of a long-term relationship, and although I was completely over it, there was an overwhelming sense of fear of becoming too attached. I did not want to risk getting my heart ripped open, an excruciating pain that I was not ready to endure again. I expressed that the feeling was mutual, but that I wasn't looking to start a serious relationship anytime soon, he completely understood.

Opening the passenger door of the red Lincoln the next time we hung out, my head spun a little more rapidly than usual since our feelings for each other were out in the open. As soon as we locked eyes, the desire of wanting to kiss him overwhelmed me. I could sense that he was feeling the same way too. We drove to St. Clair after going to Tim Horton's and parked the car, then we decided to go explore St. Clair on foot. We walked a good three miles to the closed skate park. We opened the fence that was surprisingly unlocked. Devin darted up a steep ramp with spy-like skill, which would have resembled Neo from The Matrix if put in slow motion. Me being the non-athletic person I am, I struggled a few times before Devin caught my arm and helped me up the ramp. We laid down on the wooden platform side by side, disappointed in the clouds that cloaked the radiant stars above. I suggested that we play a game; I'd ask something that I did not yet know about him, and he would do the same. Thinking on the spot was definitely not our strong suit. Four questions in and we both racked our brains for further questions, but came up empty handed.

We bolted out of the skate park and started our journey back to the car, a good 35 minutes away on foot. "I'll race ya to the

telephone pole!" I exclaimed. "You're on!" Devin shouted. Devin offered me his tennis shoes to wear since I was in my flip flops (not the best for running in). I slipped them off and into his sizable tennis shoes. My scrawny legs were no match for his athletic ones. Out of breath and glowing with sweat, we walked back to where my shoes were, picked them up and continued our expedition in our bare feet. After several minutes the car finally came into our field of vision. It was nearly 2 A.M. by the time we reached the car.

Though it was well past my curfew, I didn't want to go home, so we drove back to Devin's house instead. Entering the house the stillness was almost eerie, the only source of light were under the counter in the kitchen. I moved apprehensively further into the house, and past the dining room. He grabbed his laptop from his room and led me into the living room. "Want to watch a movie?" he suggested. "Sure!" I replied. We agreed to watch Hot Rod. As we laid on our stomachs next to each other on the floor, pillows in front of us to comfort our heads, I couldn't help but glance over and admire him. The fullness of his lips, his perfectly smooth face, the contour of his jaw, I wondered how someone so attractive could have the most extraordinary personality to go along with it. Stealing another glance at him, I was caught red handed by his slate blue eyes. I was instantly mesmerized, and noticed his eyes wander down to my lips, then back up to my eyes. It happened again and with one swift move, he tilted his head towards mine so that our lips were perfectly in line. A flood of aspiration poured out of us simultaneously as I felt his soft lips caress mine, perfectly intertwined. I wanted to stay in his arms all night, but 3 A.M was just around the corner and I needed to be home before my father woke up for work. Hand in hand, Devin led me to the car and gently kissed me goodnight. It was a perfect ending to our night, and the perfect beginning to our relationship.

Getting to know Devin Anderson this summer has been an experience that I am so thankful for. From his quirky sense of humor that matches mine, to feeling overwhelmed with sadness at times, to his appreciation for music, and honesty, I can confidently say that he is my favorite person to be with. I want him to know how special of a person he truly is, and not only to me, but others that care about him too. He has made me a better person and encourages me to go after whatever goal I want to achieve. Although he is 10 hours away at Michigan Tech, I'd like to think that our relationship is still going strong. The absence can be difficult to deal with at times, but we are both more than willing to overcome that because the euphoria in those first 60 seconds of seeing each other for the first time in a long time, is a feeling like none other and I wouldn't trade it for the world. I believe that everything happens for a reason. Even if we end up going our separate ways one day, I will be forever grateful for the times we've spent together, each one unique and memorable.






POETRY

BLANCHE REDMAN AWARD

Ryan

Jennifer Rostoni

Pebbled with calloused skin,
Tanned from excessive sun,
Marbled grey from an abundance of muck and chemicals.

His hands are like a desert rock,
Decayed from wind, sand, and debris.
His hands are an asset,
Crucial to his breadwinning.

"Why are your hands so rough and jagged? What happened to you?"
I stutter, saddened to hear the response.

His eyes, soft as a teddy bear's fur,
Meet mine,
And his head tilts to his right shoulder,
Broad and dense like a boulder.

"Aren't yours?" he responds, and he returns to his work.



SECOND PLACE

A Porch With a View

Marcus Taylor

I can see everything from here.
The back porch is open to the whole world
but no one is looking in. The grass
reaches the corn and the corn reaches the sky.
The sun caught behind thick clouds casts the
horizon in ten different shades. The dawn
is there for me on mornings, while dusk promises stars.
You love a season or a smell, the way the water
crashes on the rocks in a storm.
I love that when night comes this house is a
planet floating in a sea of stars.
The tiniest piece of intergalactic real estate.
Wind makes waves through the ocean of
corn, fluttering of stalks the only sound for miles.
Trees line the yard, all climbed, all explored.
Home is everything I can see from the back porch.

THIRD PLACE

Topsail Beach

Lindsey Wiseman

In the car going up and over the bridge,
The bridge that goes across Alligator Bay,
With its murky brown water and lily pads.
Look straight ahead and see houses,
Four story houses bathed in pastel colors,
Houses that look paler compared to the ocean.
The ocean behind the houses hitting the sand,
White and brown sands mixing with shells.
White foam taking in dark brown sands,
White waves creeping up the shore.
Green blue water turning to foam,
Ice blue water crashing towards the beach.
Layers of shells cover the sand,
Rigid shells, curled shells, shells smoothed by the water,
Children run along the beach in search of the perfect one.
Seagulls cry in the sky over the beach,
Sanderlings run along the shoreline,
Pelicans dive into the ice blue water.
Smells of salt, sand, and heat fill the air.
The bright sun roasts the sand, burning bare feet.
Burning bare feet run towards the dunes,
Weed covered dunes leading to the stairs,
Up and over the stairs to heated asphalt,
Air conditioned feet are back in the car,
Going up and over the bridge.



Hidden

Emily Fisher

My mind is dark like the evening sky.
I know there are stars
—somewhere up there—
But all I see are city lights—
everyone's sounds are drowning me out
—drowning the stars
fading cars drive by my window
and all I see is the moon,

who,
just like you,
is sometimes hidden.

My mind, dark like the evening sky,
knows that light will break
—somewhere up there—
but all I see is nothing—
the sky is black and the moon recedes
resuscitate me, morning star, oh
dispel these shadows
and hush this endless night,
bring forth the Sun
so I may see
what has been hidden.



Summer Holiday

Julie Tolley

Bulbous clouds you can touch
Skies the color of robin's eggs
Sunlight toasting skin
Sweet smells of berries and grapes
Clusters of inebriation growing on tangled vines
Leisure drives along the fingertips of the mitten
Fields of beer and silent dancing
I am engulfed in the depths of summer
Cherry pits litter the streets

Anxiety

Kathleen McGowan



Darkness creeps through my room each night
It spins webs of shadows
That disguise reality under silk sheets of falsehood.
The moon's rays drip down my windowsill,
They move as slowly as grass grows,
And the light pools into an oddly shaped puddle
That illuminates a crack in the wood floor.
Hours pass as the puddle grows into a flood
And my body drowns in the glow of daylight.
I dress myself in gossamer
And the daylight drags me outside.
Heads turn and laser stares burn holes through my skin.
Too many thoughts fill my head
Like a balloon with too much air
About to burst.
When the day drowsily wanes
Like light that drains from a once full moon,
The sun sinks into the hillside.
Worries weigh me down,
Bricks piled high on my chest.
It keeps me up at night
And I'm alone in the darkness.

Taking a Walk by the Side of the Sea

Matthew Vallee

Soft green leaves rustle in the gentle breeze;
a light wind whispers to me
as it winds its way between oak and willow,
brushing against the long grass and making it dance.
It blows away the morning mist and I am met
with the sight of the sea—its briny salt wafting
up as I peer down from the rocky crags.

Far below, as the foamy waves break against the jagged rocks,
my gaze falls upon the broken hull and ruined mast of
a sunken ship. I assume that it must have been
dashed there against the ominous cliffs during some storm;
or perhaps it had simply wandered too close to shore
during the black of night.

I wonder, too, of its origin—had it been a merchant vessel, carrying riches
and spices from one distant land to another?
Maybe it was a transport ship, set to carry away immigrants
to the New World… could it even have been a pirate,
sailing up and down the coast, sacking and plundering towns and
castles and monasteries as it pleased? What is there that remains
to tell of its legacy?



Barnacles remain: scores of great lumpy barnacles,
as well as water-rotted timber and a number of crustaceans
scurrying up and down the splintered wood.
Some sort of seabird has made its nest
at the top of the mast; numerous speckled eggs
lie nestled snugly amongst the mess of hair and sticks.

As ages pass, nothing will remain of this wreck.
The dark sea will swallow it,
as the cold water will erode the ancient rock
and the cliffs and the forest, and
just as how life once crawled out of the primordial ocean,
so too will all things someday return to it. The leviathans
and krakens and water dragons of the deep will return
for their revenge—they will be all that remains.

These are muddled thoughts, though, for such a bright morning.
A white gull cries, snapping me out of my reverie.
The hot sun shines, alone in a crisp blue sky.
The wreck is behind me now. I turn back to the forest
and continue on my way.

Petals in the Metro Station

Kathleen McGowan

Phantom faces
Fade into the crowd,
Then just as quickly emerge
From shadowed corridors.
The ghosts move like roses in the wind
Eagerly leaning in the same direction.
I marvel at pink faces
And flower petals blowing on a dank platform,
A whirl of bustling feet.
To pluck each face from its stem,
And let them rest in my hand.

A woman hurries through
With young children in tow.
The breeze rustles their petals
And a tiny hand loses its grip
On a teddy bear with one eye,
Splashing into a puddle
That reflects each petal;
Planets orbiting one another.

The train screams to a stop
And the petals begin to fall,
Leaving behind a barren, black bough
In a station of the metro.

A Blue Poem

Lindsay DeShon

I am a day.

The sun beams warm on my shoulders, the sand soft
Under bare foot. Laughter contagious splashes over small hands;
Shovels and pails at play.
Light reflects sparkling, reflecting my grin,
And the water and the sky shine blue.

I am a day.

Dismal and chilled, without shine, I hide my face behind
Heavy shrouds of drowned cloud. Every eye cries and the land soaks
In our pain. Trudging through the mud and the sludge,
We drag behind us our bedraggled hope,
And the rain and our tears fall blue.

I am a day.

My heart is given voice with the thunder. Light
Dashed with a hateful glare; teeth gnashing,
Ships wreck on the rocks of my will.
Tide, tempest, and typhoon cower in terror before me!
And the raging, roiling waves crash blue.

I am a day.

Nearing my end as evening falls, and all is quiet and still.
Birdsong is hushed, home chatter is lulled.
On the far end of the world, another Day lives.
Does he pause, does he wonder? Perhaps not,
Not until his sun sleeps and the moon and the stars sigh blue.



Like the Romantics

Emily Fisher

If I could stand here forever
—toes faced forward
and lost in your gaze—
I would,
but I fell in love with a painting
with a world behind a clear glass pane
see, as your waves crash on nuanced shores
mine are forming a hurricane.

If I could stay here forever
—kissed by the sun
and cradled by the moon-
I would,
but I fell in love with a painting,
a place I could not touch but see
see, your world continued in another's gaze
and mine has lost your symmetry.

Blue Water Bridge

Mary Warf

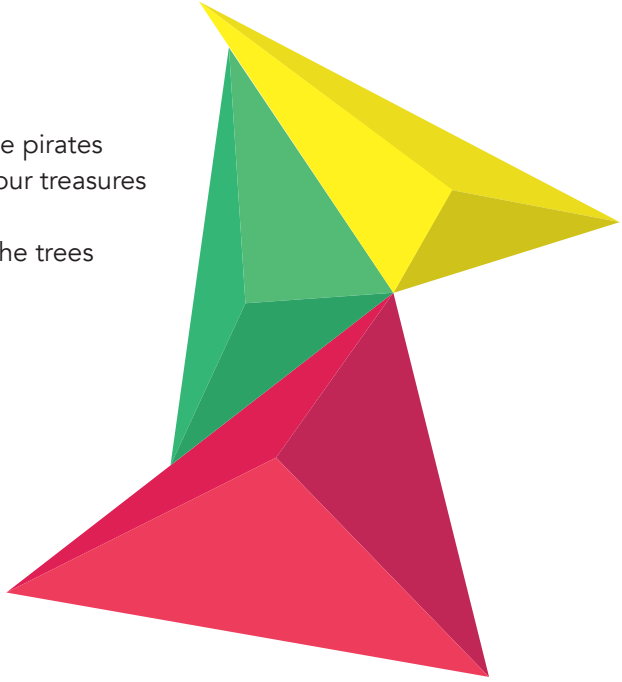
Steel arches and concrete pillars connect the two friends
With anchor arms of support.
U.S. and Canada
A gateway between nations.
Beneath,
A giant pool of aqua gleams
As the St. Clair River spills into Lake Huron.
Cool breezes glide boats at sail
Fishermen perfumed of walleye
Hooked in hours of conversation
On the calm, peaceful waters.
En route to the dinosaur skeleton structure
Coins clink at the toll booth like a jackpot machine.
Family caravans slowly climb the track
Then, through the roller coaster tunnel.
A view like the top of the Eiffel Tower.
Diesels deliver
Approach the bowling alleys of inspection lanes.
Customs question like a drill sergeant.
Citizenship.
Where are you from?
Where are you headed?
How long will you be there?

The Tree House

Sarah Baker

Once a sacred hideout
Now stands abandoned in the trees
Full of life and color years ago
Before the paint peeled away and the wood rotted
My dad's shiny push lawnmower slicing a clear path for my sisters and I
The blades of the mower like shark teeth chasing us to the treehouse
Weeds and tall itchy grass has invaded
Vines wrap around as if claiming it is theirs now
As if the captors we once imagined were real
Spies, pirates, thieves, and princesses
Crossed the treehouse's planks
Binoculars were used as wood-clad telescopes to catch the pirates
Squirrels in the trees secretly the spies plotting to snatch our treasures

Years crept by like the robbers sneaking around the trees
Fast and without notice
Our imaginations stolen by the thieves
Leaving only the treehouse and memories in its wake





Roses

Jennifer Rostoni

The water stood as pure as her love,
Clear to every admirer.

The vase curved as perfect as her body,
Symmetrically appealing and established.

The stems and leaves sparkled,
Their green hue demanding attention much like her almond-shaped eyes.

The pastel yellow rose reminded him of her beach blonde hair,
Soft to the touch and impossible to resist.

The speckled pink rose reminded him of her fragrance,
Potent but not overbearing,
Like the first smell of Spring after a dreadful Winter season.

Altogether the arrangement created something beautiful and unique,
Too closely resembling his lost but not forgotten first love.

Washing the Dog

Mary Warf

A tepid bronze siding welcomed the dog days of summer.
The sky mimicked blissful baby blue eyes
with transparent wisps of clouds.
Newly planted bushes
soaked in the warm sun.
Dad excited in his khaki work pants and rusty red short-sleeved shirt.
Mom in her memorable mint green tank and jeans folded to her knees.
Their tactful toddler in his blue buttoned overalls.
As Dad's arms of steel secured the relaxed bulldog
white frothy suds spilled
on the silky groomed grass.
Bubbly foam mirrored around the shiny silver tub.
Their family companion engulfed in the washbasin
Soothed by an aroma of oatmeal shampoo.
Mom's hands softly wrapped her son's hands
on the sea green hose resembled like a harmless gardener snake.
Sloppy wet kisses of water gently showered their furry friend.
An unforgettable family moment saturated with sparkled smiles.

First Date

Samantha Malburg

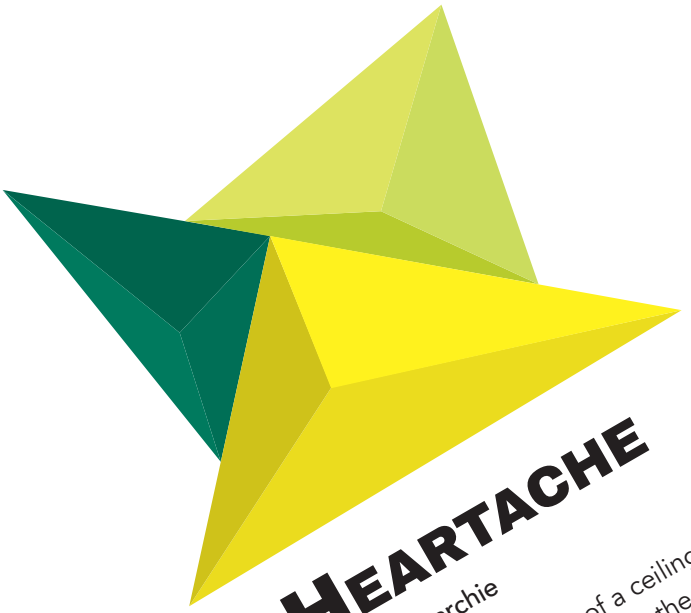


She was rose perfume,
Dancing in my shirt.
Waterfalls of hair framed her face,
Soft and blonde.
We fell into the green grass,
Near the fountain,
That was positioned beside the stone bridge.
Sounds of nature whirled around us,
Birds and people and laughter
Harmonized into one.
My head spun like a kicked soccer ball,
Thoughts spinning.
We ran to my red, 1967 Mercury Cougar.
She laughed and spilled her purse.
Out fell coins and pens,
And her favorite shade of lipstick.
She was a sunset.
Vibrant and captivating and beautiful.
She reached for my hand.
Soft and warm.
Her lips met mine for the first time.
Heavenly.

Vegas

Samantha Malburg

It lay on the kitchen table,
Edges upturned from its travel.
The image is attractive to people,
Specifically to young people.
People like me.
Live, energetic,
Offering hopes and dreams of something more
Than the average, every-day life.
Exciting.
Tempting.
As tempting as dancers dressed nearly naked,
To the eyes of the men
Who lurk into the dimly lit night-clubs.
I can smell the cheap perfume,
Its essence floats from the card.
I know who mailed it—
He is one of those men
With gawking eyes
At women much younger than he.
Nuns stroll on the sidewalks.
How strange to see nuns on the streets of Sin City.
Small cursive danced across the backside.
It began, "My dearest daughter…"
My eyes scanned it quickly.
"My sincerest apologies."
It's been seven years.
Seven years since he has been home.
Seven years since he has seen me.
Lucky number seven.
Lovely, father.
I'm Blackjack,
Twenty-One.
He must be a terrible gambler.
If he were playing for keeps, he sure lost me.
I tossed it in the trash,
Closed the lid.
Taking with it all of its false hopes and dreams
And flashy signs and naked women
And the man who used to be my father,
"Las Vegas" disappeared into darkness.



Heartache

Jenna Pewarchie

Silent, numbing, hum of a ceiling fan that's spinning in a continuum of motion.
Loneliness sounds through the repetitive drip of a leaky faucet.
Poisoned tongue with stained breath of nicotine.
Rain that cracks the windowsill.
A rose that beads red when pricked by its beauty.
The smell of damp mold hosted by old books.
The sound of screaming strings at the mercy of the master bow.
Decaying bricks crumbling to the asphalt.
A rope snapping, fraying around ridged fingernails.
The smell of burnt, splintering, slabs of wood.
Free falling into a vast abyss.
LSD and one night stand hotel rooms.
Distant ring of absence on the telephone.
A breeze that bites the skin in quick lashes.
Cheap pornographic magazines.
Whiskey that burns the throat that lies.



The Runners World

Devon Zerilli

The road seems ready to roll with them like the wind
The people gather together
anticipating the beginning of another start
How brightly colored their feet are
Numbers written across their chest
Ready, Set GO!
How swiftly the sun bounces off their faces
All at once it is a blur.
In a flash, a bolt, a squeal
All is silent
The race has began
and quickly ends
Dedication
Commitment
Sense of accomplishment
Are swirling around their fluttering hearts
Their brightly colored feet, again
kiss the cheeks of the road goodbye





VISUAL ARTS

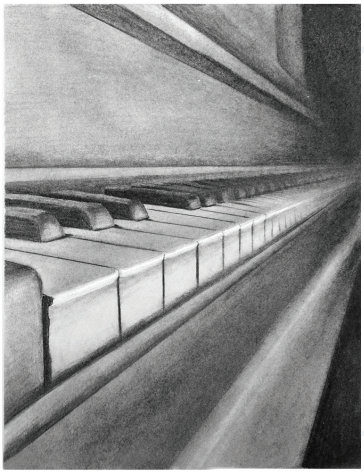
FIRST PLACE

Keys of Life

Rachel Henion
Charcoal







Sleeping On the Edge

SECOND PLACE

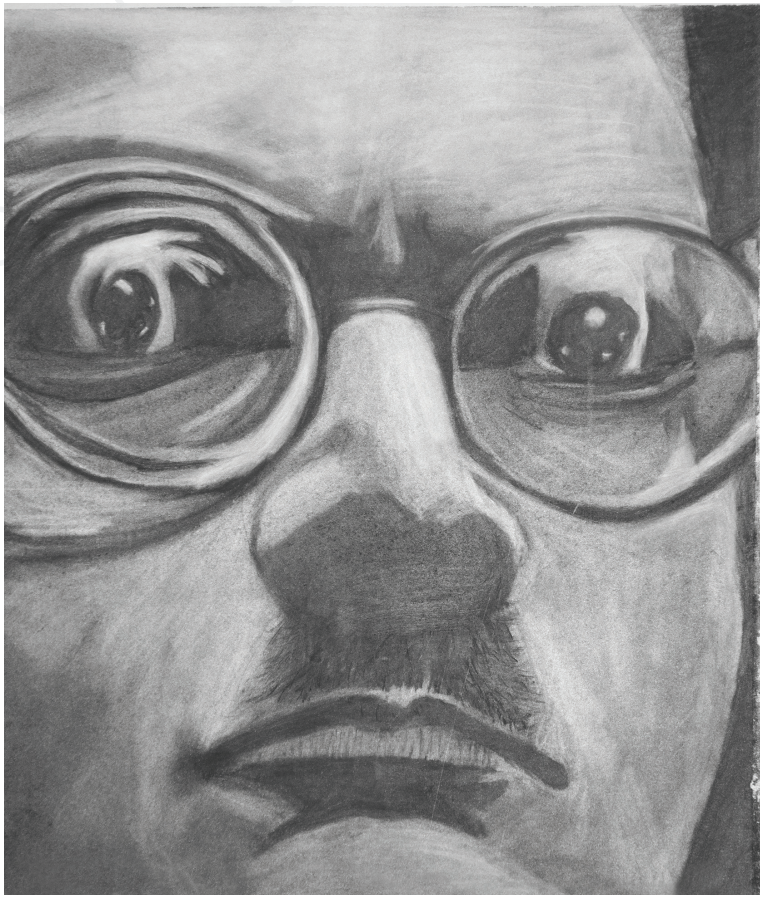
Rachel Henion
Acrylic Paint



THIRD PLACE

The Look

Joanna Ingles
Charcoal



Pee Wee's Playhouse Interior

Bryan Billiet
Ceramic



In the Face of Light

Madison Liebler
Charcoal



Leaves

Miranda Haberer
Charcoal



Saddle

Joanna Ingles
Mixed Media



Looking Up

Joanna Ingles
Photography



Angry Bull

Cassandra Schrader
Collage



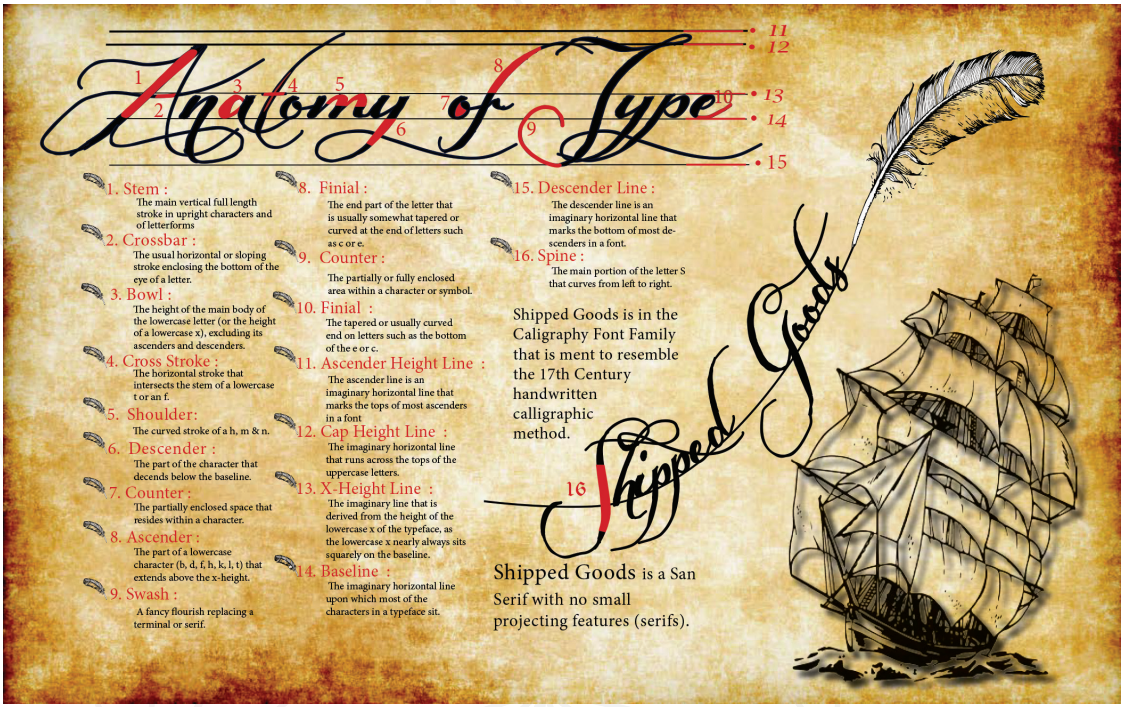
Pearl Jam

Chavenia Hernandez
Digital



Shipped Goods Type Poster

Chavenia Hernandez
Digital



Still Life

Chavenia Hernandez
Charcoal and Pastels



Death of A Flower

Taylor Smalley
Pen and Ink



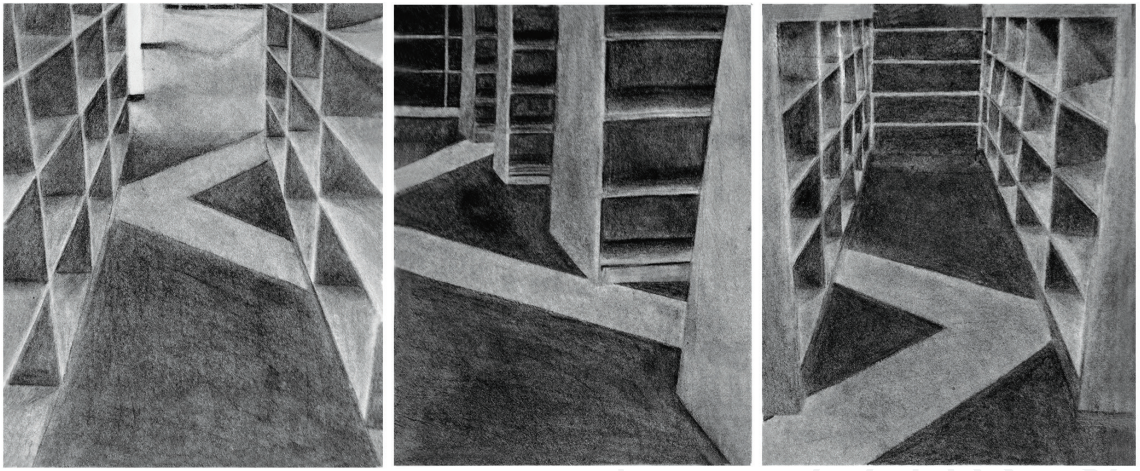
Self Portrait

Taylor Smalley
Charcoal



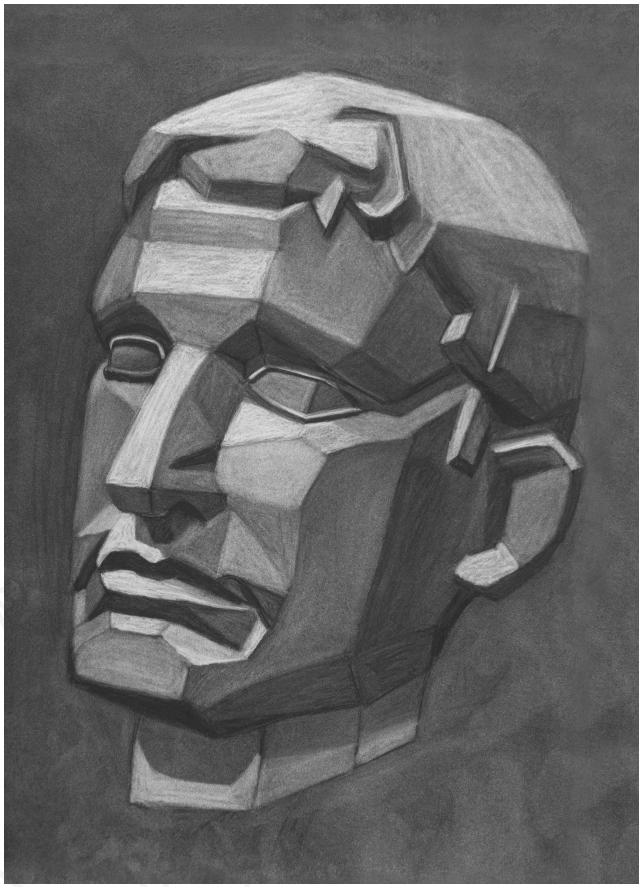
Shelves

Miranda Haberer
Charcoal



Planes of Man

Madison Liebler
Charcoal



Bananas

Jason Grill
Digital



Hungry Like the Wolf

Jason Grill
Digital



Time Traveler

Brandon Reed
Mixed Media



Penguin

Fred Ward
Stone Carving



West Michigan Autumn

Mallory Turney
Photography





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